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ABSTRACT

Five lesson plans that were prepared for Black History Month can be used to teach purposeful, interesting, and reasonably balanced black history to students in grades 3-6. Objectives for preparing black studies units are to: (1) make reasonably balanced presentations through social studies, language arts, music, and other appropriate subject areas; (2) provide a better balance between the fame-oriented emphasis and the often neglected biographical emphasis; and (3) make use of the best literature and media available. Each lesson describes what the teacher did and what the children learned, and includes suggestions for developing resource units on the lesson plan topic. The first unit, a career lesson, focuses on black women in aviation. Early American jazz is the theme of unit 2. The third unit uses the poem "A Black Mother's Advice to Her Son," by Langston Hughes, to illustrate the possibilities for developing a unit on literature by black writers. The fourth unit helps students answer the question: "Why study black history?" The fifth lesson deals with taking pride in being black. (RM)

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OBSERVING BLACK HISTORY IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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Some years ago, just after the annual observance of what was then American Negro History Week, I overheard two little black boys arguing. The third- and fourth-grade youngsters had participated in a week-long celebration which included special events and activities that centered largely on famous black Americans.

Tom, the younger of the two, asked his brother, "What's a Negro?" Dan paused for a moment and then declared: "You are a Negro!" Tom did not like the answer and said quickly, "I'm not a Negro!" The argument went back and forth until Tom finally explained: "I'm not a Negro because I'm not black and I'm not famous."

What was Tom's problem? Could he really not identify himself with the term Negro, although he was enrolled in an all-black elementary school? Was it possible under such circumstances that he had been sheltered from his racial identity? Was this medium brown-skinned child confused by the then emerging use of black to designate race instead of Negro? And could the one-sided emphasis on famous black people, during American Negro History Week, have added to his confusion?

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I wanted to know what was happening in Tom's mind and talked with him. Tom, it developed, had become concerned about his racial identity at some time prior to American Negro History Week, when another black boy had called him a nigger. Tom knew several boys who tended to call other children niggers, always as insults. As the story unfolded, Tom's reflections about the activities of American Negro History Week -- mostly involving the life stories of famous black Americans -- caused him to reject his racial identity or helped him find support for a rejection which had already taken place.

I believe that educators would accept without argument the view that celebrations of black history by young children should be valid and meaningful to them, and that learning something about black history early in elementary school is imperative at least for the black child. But Tom's di'emma suggests that there may be a problem with the emphasis on fame in the celebration and often the teaching of black history: i.e., emphasizing only or mostly famous persons is simply not adequate for young, challenging minds. In fact, such a disproportionate emphasis on fame, which often translates into popular notions of "success," may do a disservice to them and to black history.

The essence of black history in this country, after all, is the story of the continuing struggle of a people to achieve human dignity and freedom, and equity and parity in the economic and political life of America. This struggle continues to require faith, personal sacrifice, discipline, courage, hard work, intelligence, creativity, and lots of "soul." Famous black people were

and continue to be deeply affected by the struggle, of course, and their stories are worth telling. But the struggle has been and continues to be one of an entire people, not only of exceptionally talented individuals.

Now that black history is observed for the entire month of February, there is considerably more time to view it from a broader, more balanced perspective. But a new problem of imbalance could occur in the imminent celebration, each February, of the new national holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr., beginning in 1985. This development however justified, indeed welcome, makes it even more imperative that schools assume their proper role in observing black history, and that educators put the civil rights struggle into larger perspective -- one which begins with the early civil rights efforts of Frederick Douglass. This larger perspective would provide a wonderful opportunity to teach some important lessons from black history which relate to the total struggle of black people. Such lessons would facilitate the achievement of two objectives: (1) underscoring and reinforcing the important role of blacks in American history for all people; and (2) helping the black child to achieve a sense of identity and racial pride.

Educators can help to achieve these objectives not only by developing special educational packages for the observation of Black History Month, but also by infusing the entire curriculum with imaginative lessons involving black history. More specifically, schools and teachers can best address the concern

expressed here by:

1. Providing pupils with reasonably balanced presentations of black history through social studies, language arts, music and other appropriate areas of study. The task will be especially difficult in social studies because so much of the content will have to be compressed and adapted for effective use at the elementary school level. But with imagination and creativity, much can be done to teach black history in interesting, stimulating lessons, and in ways that reinforce the development of basic skills -- especially reading, writing, listening and fact-finding skills.

2. Providing a better balance between the emphasis on fame and the need for fuller biographical information about and understanding of the circumstances of the people involved. The biographical emphasis almost invariably reflects the aspirations and continuing struggle of black people. For example, the new docudrama on the life of Jesse Owens, does just that: while attention is given to his Olympic feats, a great deal more is said about what it was like to be black and grow up in Owens' time, talent not withstanding.

3. Developing and implementing interesting teaching units and lesson plans based on the best literature available and utilizing appropriate media and audiovisual materials that will embellish lessons and help to reinforce the achievement of instructional objectives.*

I made these suggestions to a group of teaching interns who were enrolled in an educational laboratory which I conducted. We were working on a variety of teacher competencies which included the development of lesson plans, teaching units, and resource units. They said they understood my views about observing black

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* Medgar Evers College has compiled a Black Studies Mediography, a 62-page listing of films, phonodiscs, phonotape-cassettes, and multi-media kits, which may be previewed in its Media Center. Copies of the Mediography are in very limited supply and are not generally available to the public. Arrangements, however, are possible through my office, for those who are seriously interested, at costs -- duplication, handling, and postage.

history and thought they felt the same way. With February only a few days away, I seized upon the moment and asked each of them to plan and conduct a self-contained lesson in observation of Black History Month. The lessons were developed and most of them were conducted in simulated situations; others were done in regular classrooms where interns served as paraprofessionals. What we learned together from the critiques that followed each lesson helped greatly in revising and planning subsequent lessons.

The five lessons presented here do not follow the typical lesson-plan format. Rather, they simply describe what the teacher did and what the children learned, and include suggestions for developing resource units. Basically, each teacher was trying to get students involved with the study of black history through interesting and meaningful content, and through unusual strategies. In addition, students were expected to develop their reading, writing, and listening skills and to add new words to their functioning vocabularies. One lesson, additionally, concerned problem-posing and inquiry -- getting students to learn with minimal direction and supervision. Three of the lessons approach the study of black history somewhat indirectly -- through career study, music, and literature; two lessons approach the subject directly -- through direct inquiry with the use of questions. While the lessons were aimed primarily at the middle and upper elementary grades, there is no reason that the concepts involved cannot apply to all grades.

To be sure, these lessons are not presented so much as models to be replicated but as provocative concepts, suggesting possi-

bilities for developing resource units -- and ultimately teaching units and lessons -- that facilitate the teaching of purposeful, meaningful, interesting and reasonably balanced black history to young children. The strength of the resource unit is its comprehensive content and materials, which can be drawn upon continually throughout the school year and as unusual opportunities present themselves.

LESSON 1:

Black Women on Wings. -- This was a career lesson and the motivation was outstanding. A large poster on the blackboard displayed photographs of four helmeted aviators -- their helmets apparently dating back to the years following World War I. The teacher asked, innocently: "How many men do you see in the photographs on the poster?" "Four!" the children chorused. The pleased teacher made her point: the aviators were three black men and one black woman. The students were surprised, almost startled. They had no idea that black women flew airplanes and had been doing so for quite some time. The teacher began telling them the story of the little known Bessie Coleman, the woman in the poster-picture, how she had to go abroad to become a licensed pilot, and how America was hardly ready for women in the cockpit, let alone black women. It was in France that the black aviatrix received an international license from the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, in 1921, approximately one year prior to the famed Amelia Earhart's first solo flight. Ms. Coleman's life and barn-storming career ended when her plane crashed in Florida, in 1926 -- about a year before Lindberg's historic flight.

The teacher then asked if they knew what it took to become a pilot. She wrote on the blackboard some of their answers and

then proceeded to develop these into her own list, which included aptitudes and special abilities, physical fitness, and rigorous training over a period of time, including instruction in meteorology and navigation. In the process, she introduced them to interesting aviation vocabulary -- monoplane, biplane, barnstorming, aerodynamics, flier -- and to other new words such as license, prejudice, abroad and career. She asked them to write an essay about Bessie Coleman, and indicated that they would be expected to define the new words and use them correctly in written sentences when the class met again the following day. The lesson was concluded with a mention of another black aviatrix -- Janet Waterfoot Bragg -- who also did stunt flying because no other career opportunities were open to her. The teacher informed the class that Texas International Airlines was the first airline company to hire a black woman pilot some time before its merger with Continental Airlines.

Developing the Resource Unit. -- We reviewed this lesson subsequently and talked about how we could build a resource unit around aviation and space flight, not limiting it to women and making it flexible enough to include other ethnic and racial groups consistent with the composition of the class. A variety of self-contained lessons could be planned as part of a teaching unit -- dealing with such topics as blacks in aviation in World War II, commercial airline pilots who are black, career opportunities in aviation in all branches of the armed forces, and the new field of space exploration -- all of which could be continually updated. Apropos to this point, one of the teaching interns conducted a career lesson and unfortunately used outdated pictures, from as long ago as the 1940's, of distinguished blacks in career fields included in the lesson. Many current pictures were available.

Information regarding blacks in aviation can be obtained from the Smithsonian Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), which developed the "Black Wings" poster, from Negro Airmen International (NAI), an organization of black pilots, and from Black Wings, a periodical. There is also the possibility that Tuskegee Institute's archives and black studies collection would have some interesting materials. It was at the nearby Tuskegee Army Airfield in Alabama that the first black aviators trained for the U.S. Army Air Corps. Of course the Schomberg Library (Afro-American history) in New York City has excellent materials, but these have to be used on the premises.

LESSON 2:

Early American Jazz and Its Instruments. -- This was a lesson in music appreciation and history. Mounted on the wall were portraits of pioneers in jazz. There also were objects of varying sizes and shapes covered on the table.

To introduce the subject to the students, the teacher played an early recording which she had copied on tape. It was a composition of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, played in the New Orleans style of Joseph "King" Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band of Chicago. The music won the children's affection right away: they bobbed their heads, snapped their fingers and patted their feet. The teacher then asked if anybody recognized the music. A boy said it sounded Southern, especially like the music heard sometimes at professional football games in New Orleans. The teacher said the boy was right except that the music was more New Orleans than Southern, and had moved up the Mississippi River to Chicago; it was an orchestral arrangement of ragtime, a jazz precursor; it captured the rhythmic tempo or beat of the piano rags and was accompanied by a loud brassy and sometimes bluesy sound.

Observing that ragtime was completely new to the children, the teacher's explanation began: "Ragtime has to do with the type of rhythm (time, beat, meter) in musical compositions (played or in writing) called rags. This rhythm is literally ragged or choppy (ragged time or ragtime), based on a series of less than whole notes played throughout a melody." Sensing a readiness for more on the part of the children, she asked a student to read the definition of ragtime from the dictionary, which went something like this: "a unique rhythm in which there is more or less continuous syncopation in the melody." She asked another student to read the definition for syncopation, which went as follows: "an occurrence of accented notes on the weak beat." Playing the recording again, the teacher asked the children to listen especially for the ragtime rhythm. As they listened, she went into a rhythmic clapping of her hands, and the students joined her as if they were getting the idea. "Now, I want you to listen to another Dixieland recording, not only to hear the syncopated rhythm but to see if you can identify some of the instruments from which the sounds are coming." The students identified three instruments -- the piano, drum, and trumpet, which really was a cornet. The teacher named the remaining instruments and explained that each had a specific function or job in a band. These functions and their respective instruments were identified and defined as follows:

1. Melody (cornet, trumpet) is the tune, the music you recognize the song by, the chief or principal part in a harmonic composition.

2. Embellishments and fills (clarinet, saxophone) are the smooth, melodious sounds, often in harmony, which add to the beauty of a composition.

3. Rhythm (piano, drum, guitar, banjo, fiddle, tuba, string bass) is the beat or tempo that is so important to jazz; it is often provided by several instruments which, when played together, comprise the rhythm section.

The teacher noted that, while rhythm appeared to be top-heavy with instruments, several had faded almost into oblivion -- especially the guitar, banjo and fiddle which had been more prevalent among blacks, prior to jazz, than other instruments with which orchestral jazz was developed.

The objects on the table were uncovered; they were musical instruments. There also were pictures of the instruments that were too big to manage or were not available in the high school band department. Two band students demonstrated what the sounds were like from all the brass and reed instruments -- trumpet, clarinet, saxophone and trombone, all of which are European.

The teacher pondered: "How did blacks in New Orleans acquire these horns as far back as the turn of the eighteenth century?" Not waiting for an answer, she said "It was popularly believed that these instruments were abandoned by American soldiers in New Orleans, following the conclusion of the Spanish American War, in 1898. Whatever the case, these instruments played a part in the birth of New Orleans jazz, which was begun in brothels, performed in ministrel shows, and practiced in funeral marches and 'jam sessions.' It was the music and feelings of a struggling people -- their toils, joy, sadness, melancholy -- a pouring out of feeling and soul, perhaps the only constant in the jazz of today."

There were five pictures mounted on the wall and arranged from left to right. The teacher ended the lesson by turning to and reviewing them as follows:

1. Joseph "King" Oliver, great cornet soloist and leading practioner of the New Orleans style.

2. Ferdinard Joseph La Menthe "Jelly Roll" Morton, jazz pianist of all styles.

3. Edward "Kid" Ory, "tailgate" (end of the bandwagon) trombonist.

4. Louis Armstrong, great trumpeteer and musical personality.

5. Buddy Bolden, considered the first jazz cornetist.

The students had been introduced to a considerable number of new words -- ragtime, syncopation, melody, embellishments, etc.; they got new information, and their listening skills were challenged. Now they were being given two assignments: to choose one of the famous musicians and write a brief biographical essay; and to be prepared to use the new vocabulary in sentences during the next class session.

The material in this lesson was too much for a single meeting of the class. Melody or rhythm alone could have taken a lesson or two. Nevertheless, the concept is excellent and should lend itself well to the development of a resource unit.

Developing the Resource Unit: There is a wonderful opportunity here to begin the development of a resource unit on jazz -- collecting record albums, making cassette recordings from broadcasts and tapes, collecting pictures, identifying source materials in libraries and museums, compiling a bibliography, and identifying human resources in the commmunity, including both jazz musicians and the aficionados.

This teacher began with Encyclopedia Britannica, which includes a bibliography on jazz, as a good starting point. The Mediography in the Media Center of the Medgar Evers College Library, referred to earlier, has a list of more than forty phonodiscs, multi-media kits, and phonotape cassettes of jazz.

One example of how these audiovisual materials can be used to supplement and reinforce instruction is found in three companion phonotape cassettes, all of which were released by Music Concepts, ©1971: (1) New Orleans Jazz; virtuosos recreate the sounds of classical New Orleans Jazz. (2) Pappa Jack the Patriarch; Pappa Jack Laine recalls the birth of New Orleans Jazz. (3) The red light district of New Orleans; Jazz artists recall the birth of the blues on Bourbon Street. Each of these tapes include narration or interviews, music, and a set of questions, the answers to which are subtly supplied during the talking; they are excellent for developing listening skills, writing short essays in class, and for information and entertainment.

LESSON 3:

"A Black Mother's Advice to her Son." -- This dramatically talented teacher trainee did a superb job of reading one of Langston Hughes' poems, "Mother to Son," which depicts the plight and determination of a black woman who alludes to her own struggle as she challenges her son:

> "So boy, don't you turn back.
> Don't you set down on the steps
> 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard
> Don't you fall now -
> For I'se still goin', honey,
> I'se still climbin',
> And life for me ain't been no crystal stair."

The motivating peom was perfect; the pupils applauded. The teacher moved swiftly to pass out hand-printed xerox copies of the poem and ask the students about its meaning. Getting no volunteers, the teacher explained the meaning of the poem and indicated that it represented the plight of many black

mothers, some of whom are single parents. The class then read the poem in unison, twice. In between the readings, the teacher said that the poem was beautifully written in Black English, and, on the second reading, invited the children to sharpen their ability to read the poem with the drama and effect intended by the author. When they finished the second reading, the teacher pointed out that Hughes had written many poems that portray the historic plight of Black Americans, and that only some of them were written in Black English or dialect. Commenting on Hughes' poems and prose in standard English, she said that there was a time and place in everyday life for each style, and indicated the when of each.

The teacher asked finally: "What did Hughes mean in the poem by the metaphor 'crystal stair'?" She wrote metaphor on the blackboard, defined it, and gave several illustrations of its use. She also indicated that the class would study the meaning of other writings by Hughes -- poems and prose -- and that she would be introducing other black writers as well.

The lesson was concluded with the reading of "Harlem," a short Hughes poem written in standard English, which alludes to the dream about which Martin Luther King later spoke in his famous "I have a dream" speech during the March on Washington, in 1963, and which inspired the naming of Lorraine Hansberry's Broadway production, "A Raisin in the Sun." The first three lines of the poem are as follows:

> "What happens to a dream deferred?
> Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?
> Or fester like a sore - and then run?"

Developing the Resource Unit. -- Enormous possibilities exist for developing a resource unit on literature by black writers which conveys important messages relevant to the black experience,

and which can be adapted for most elementary grade levels. The first step is to consult with a black studies professor or department head. Get advice and recommendations regarding literature that can be used for your purpose, and then examine the literature yourself. Once various selections are made and acquired, file them with your evaluative comments, which makes planning their future use much easier.

There is an interesting collection of phonodiscs, multimedia kits and films in the Medgar Evers College Library, as shown in the Mediography of its Media Center. A few examples follow:

KT 0062 Bla — Black poems, Black images. (kit) Pleasantville, N.Y. Warren Schloat Productions, Inc., n.d. Includes: 6 filmstrips -- "Place," "Manhood," "Womanhood," "The Present," "Childhood," "The Past"; 6 cassettes.

LP 0327 Hug — Hughes, Langston, 1902-1967. Langston Hughes reads and talks about his poems. (Phonodisc) Spoken Arts SA1064. (1970)

LP 0413 Dun — Dunbar, Paul Laurence. Poems for young people. (phonodisc) America's first Black poet laureate. Wil-Cas Records SO 2003-2004 (1974)

LP 0256 Tou — Tough poems for tough people. Read by Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, and Henry Braun. Edited by Florence Howe. (Phonodisc) Caedman TC 1396. (1972)

Some of the listed materials come with teacher guides.

LESSON 4:

That We and Others Might Know. -- This teacher managed to bring a big suitcase of popular magazines to class -- Time, Newsweek, Life, People, Sports Illustrated, etc. She asked each of her students to take three or four magazines from the suitcase and leaf through them at their desks; she

also took several copies and did the same thing. When the children seemed to have gone through the publications, she asked: "How many of you saw an article about a black person?" One student recalled seeing an article about Michael Jackson in People; another saw a black featured in Sports Illustrated as the most valuable player in a championship football game. She then asked them to look at the magazines again -- this time only at the covers -- and to show their hands if they had a magazine with a black person on its cover. Three hands went up of students who held different issues of Sports Illustrated, each of which had a black athlete on its cover. There were no others, so one student mused that "Except in a few cases, we are left out." Another student said, "It's because we're black." The teacher then displayed an issue of Ebony Magazine, which called attention to the virtual, systematic omission of blacks from cover stories in major U.S. magazines, regardless of the magnitude of their achievement. She added that not only are blacks significantly omitted from current history, as recorded by major magazines, but that they have also been characteristically and systematically omitted from American history from its beginning, except for selective portrayals of blacks whose images, beliefs and actions were acceptable to powerful conservative elements in American society. Turning to a poster-portrait taped on the wall, the teacher said, "A study of this man's life and work underscores his concern about the significant omission of blacks from American history. Further, he tells us why it is so important not only to observe black history but to study and preserve it so that we and others might know the truth about blacks and their importance to American life and history." Pointing, the teacher said, "This man, Carter G. Woodson, more than anybody else, is considered the founder of the movement to research, write, and preserve black history, and of the nation's annual observance of black history. Yet, few people know about him, and his name is rarely mentioned by most groups and institutions which observe black history with

public events, exhibits, and utterances. It was also Woodson, along with W. E. B. DuBois, who pioneered the movement to restore the African background of the history of American blacks. Woodson was a scholar -- a graduate of Berea College and the University of Chicago, and a student at Harvard and the Sorbonne -- who devoted his career to the work of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which he directed. So, why study and observe black history? Because blacks have had an important role in American history, and we study, observe and even celebrate it so that we and others might know."

The teacher then asked the students how many of them would like to help organize a black history club and become its members. All hands went up. The teacher indicated finally that at the next meeting of the class she would review guidelines for organizing a club as well as possible areas of study and activities related to black history.

Developing the Resource Unit. -- A considerable body of black history has been written and catalogued, and it continues to evolve. There are also materials dealing with the African background of black Americans. Available audiovisual materials include documentaries, productions such as "Roots," and a variety of phonodiscs and phonotape cassettes. These are listed in the Medgar Evers College Mediography under the Social Sciences. There is also a listing under Africa. These materials and available literature are more than ample to meet the needs of a black history club such as proposed in the above lesson. In developing the resource unit, materials might be assembled which attempt to answer some of the following questions as examples:

1. How did Negroes come to America? Were they all enslaved?

2. Was slavery a Southern institution only?

3. What was slave life like and why was the slave so debased?

4. Were slaves happy?

5. Who were Quakers and how did they feel about slavery?

6. What connection was there between the end of the Revolutionary War and the end of slavery in the North?

7. Who were the abolitionist?

8. Why did Negroes fight in the Civil War?

9. What role did Negroes play in Reconstruction?

10. How was it that Negroes served in reconstruction governments?

11. Who were carpetbaggers and scalawags?

12. Why did Reconstruction fail?

13. What was the Plesy vs. Ferguson decision about, and what was the basis of Justice Harlan's dissent?

14. What has been the story of violence and race relations in America?

15. What was the role of the NAACP in the Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education?

16. Why did 200,000 people "March on Washington" on behalf of civil rights in 1963.

These questions are only suggestive and are based on the findings of The Negro in American History Textbooks: A Report of a Study of the Treatment of Negroes in American History Textbooks Used in Grades Five and Eight and in the High Schools of California's Public Schools, Sacremento: California State Department of Education, June 1964, pp. 1-6. In developing the resource unit, many more questions might be added, facilitating greater flexibility to work with a class or club.

LESSON 5:

Knowing and Accepting with Pride. -- This was an inquiry lesson. A continuing problem was posed and a series of questions were presented to direct the inquiry.

> The problem: "At a time when the 'black is beautiful' concept seems to have gained widespread acceptance, especially among blacks, far too many black children use or refer to black and Negro in derogatory or negative terms."
>
> The problem question: Why is this so?

To address the question adequately, a series of information generating questions were put forth as follows:

1. What is a Negro?
2. Who are black people?
3. What is the difference, if any, between being black and Negro?
4. What is the origin of black or Negroid people?
5. When and how did they come to America?
6. How are they perceived by others?
7. How do you think it feels to be a Negro or black person?
8. What is black history?
9. Why is Black History Month observed in America?

To motivate the children further, the teacher took them through a thought-provoking experience, aimed at reinforcing the importance of the first question, "What is a Negro?" An interesting array of twenty-four photographs was mounted on pieces of heavy cardboard; these were in the crayon-eraser

trough, leaning against the blackboard. Some of the photographs were portraits taken over a period of years by a local photographer. The collection included a wide variety of skin colors, facial features, and hair textures. Each student was then given a sheet of paper numbered to match the numbers on the individual photographs. They were asked to study the photographs closely and then place a check-mark by the numbers which they thought represented the photograph of a Negro or black person. When they had finished, she put the right answers on the blackboard above the appropriate photographs. The students were surprised when they discovered that they had all gotten correctly only the photographs of blacks who had the most pronounced Negroid features, and several whites whose physical characteristics were extremely Caucasoid. They had mistaken two whites for blacks because of their olive complexion and kinky or Afro-styled hair. "Why do you think you had difficulty?" asked the teacher. Two eager students gave these answers: "People have mixed blood"; and "There are no pure races." "Those are pretty good answers" replied the teacher; "we shall explore the question further."

The teacher then organized the class into three working groups and gave each student a list of materials with which they would work. These included xeroxed definitions of Negro as legalized by various states -- especially Southern states. She pointed to the reading area in the classroom and indicated that she had placed on the shelves paperback copies of most of the books on the reading list, which she gave to each student. She also announced that arrangements had been made in the library for each group to come at different times to look for information not provided in the classroom.

It was explained to all students that they would be working with a group in locating and discussing their findings, and that each individual would prepare an answer to the problem question in the form of an essay, away from the

group. The essay was to include conclusions consistent with the information gathered by the respective group. As the students worked, they had access to the teacher who tried to limit her role to clarifying the assignment or explaining materials students thought to be difficult. But she did not provide information directly related to the assignment; she also was totally non-judgmental and non-valuing.

As it developed, the lesson was very good but overly ambitious and had to be extended over a period of three days, in between all the other things students were doing.

Over the next two meetings, the teacher had to keep the groups working; she monitored individual effort and observed group interaction, and occasionally reassigned a student to another group. Toward the end of the period on the second day, students were asked to return to their individual seats and begin forming their conclusions based on information that was discussed in each group and which had been recorded by each student.

On the final day, students wrote essays; some of them were good. The one I liked best is quoted verbatim as follows:

> "Negroes or black people were despised by everybody, including themselves. It's no wonder that nobody wanted to be a Negro. There is a carryover of this feeling today, which is passed on to children by adults. That's why some school children refer to Negro or black as something that is not good, and the black is beautiful idea has not changed anything."

Students achieved an elementary understanding of the complexities of race and genetics; they learned a little something about family trees and the scarcity or non-existence of pure races; and they also learned new vocabulary. But the most important learning was how to gather information, digest it, discuss it, draw conclusions, and write them up intelligently.

Developing the Resource Unit. -- There will be continuing problems regarding race. Teachers should be prepared to deal with some of these problems on an academic and intellectual basis. A good resource unit on Negro or black history should be quite helpful. Such a unit would require considerable time to evolve, but an expanding body of excellent information is available -- books, periodicals, documentaries, docudramas in the form of films and video tapes, phonodiscs, phonotape cassettes, multimedia kits, etc. -- and should facilitate inquiry or problem-posing lessons and teaching units. The problems of racial identity and attitudes cannot be addressed by the teacher alone; parents need to be involved. Armed with a good resource unit on black history and the black experience, the teacher is in a position to invite parents to sit with their children and participate in activities that address important racial questions in the classroom. To be sure, questions of racial identity and attitudes are not limited to the ghetto and the disadvantaged. There is a small but increasingly visible group of interracial parents -- often affluent and educated -- who want guidance regarding children who want least of all to be Negro or black as demonstrated by their behavior in school. The resource unit, therefore, becomes exceedingly important, i.e., the extent to which a teacher can be helpful may well depend upon the quality and quantity of information at his or her disposal as well as on the nature of specific questions to be addressed.

Teachers should begin now to develop a bibliography of books and periodicals which deal with black history and the black

experience. They should select publications that provide valid basic information and whose content can be adapted to the needs of young children. They should also review as many of these publications themselves as they can, in addition to getting recommendations from experts in the field.

In literature, there is The Negro in 20th Century America, by John Hope Franklin and Isidore Starr (Vintage Books, New York, 1967). This kaleidoscopic volume has an extensive bibliography and quotes from a variety of sources. It also provides an extensive list of Vintage books representing various disciplines; some of them address the problem of the American Negro.

Black Child Care, by James P. Comer and Alvin F. Poussaint (Pocket Books), provides interesting perspectives for teaching the black child from infancy through adolescence. The two black psychiatrists have also included an excellent list of suggested readings.

Major bookstores also have a variety of books on black history and culture. One of the largest, Barnes and Noble Bookstores (Fifth Avenue and 18th Street, New York City), has an extensive collection of paperbacks on the subject in a single section, which facilitates browsing.

The Media Center at the Medgar Evers College Library has an interesting collection of audio visual materials to supplement instruction. For instance, its Mediography lists seven phonocassette titles under "The Atlantic Slave Trade." Copyrighted

by the Center for Cassette Studies, in 1974, these tapes discuss various aspects of the slave trade. Other examples are:

ET 0249 Pre — Prejudice. Kit. Educational dimensions, 1971. Includes teacher's guide, 1 cassette, 1 filmstrip.

CS 3424 — The Slave Experience; a dramatization of the conflict between free institutions and slavery. (Phono-Cassette). Forum Associates 255 1276f, c1969.

CS 3279 U5 — Unlearning Prejudice; experts discuss the nature of remedies for prejudice in the U.S. (Phonotape-Cassette). The Center for Cassette Studies
010 6186, c1971.
26 min. (The disadvantaged American)
Includes bibliography.

An explanation of the pyschological nature of prejudice and of the means to counteract it.

CS 3387 Y1 — You've Got to be Taught to Hate (Phonotape-Cassette). The Center for Cassette Studies, CSDII88 (1975).
29 min.

Conclusion:

Black History Month, each February, provides an exceptional opportunity not only to celebrate black history but also to teach important aspects of it when public interest is high, and when a number of institutions and organizations develop outstanding exhibits and assemble unusual materials on the subject.

The well-developed resource unit, continuously available, will facilitate the use of alternative teaching strategies -- including the use of alternative materials and personalities -- and, we may hope, with more effective results. And make no mistake about it, the use of famous personalities in teaching black history is encouraged rather than frowned upon; it is the

over-emphasis on fame and the sacrifice of significant content that is at issue. Aside from the use of motivational strategies to introduce black onal strategies to introduce black history, I believe that it is important to begin any study of it with discussions of the problems and issues which helped to shape that history and then move to the ideas, beliefs, and achievements of famous personalities to reinforce what has been taught.

Black history's importance in American history and in the ultimate destiny of a traditionally democratic America makes it an educational imperative. It not only should claim more attention in textbooks but should be creatively taught from well developed teaching plans which bring our increasing wealth of resources to bear on the subject.